

Strategies for Institutional Change

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RESOURCE	Guide

Working within higher education and more specifically, working with student employees, requires institutions to maintain adaptability while staying in tune with relevant trends, needs, and competencies of their students. Change and evolution is inevitable as we navigate technological advancements, economic pressures, shifts in industries, and an ever evolving education. Managing change can be an overwhelming task and if not carried out effectively, can lead to burn out, distrust, and misuse of time and energy.

If change management, or the structural process of the human aspects of innovative development within an organization, is carried out adequately and successfully, the result can be:

- Overall understanding of the rationale behind the change
- Leadership buy-in and support
- Momentum towards the steps to accomplish the change
- Less resistance towards change
- Identification of barriers impacting success of change
- Trust within the institution
- Positive successful change institutional record
- Overall institutional cultural change
- Recognition as change agents by other institutions

It is important to recognize the varying ecosystems that exist across institutions and even within one singular institution. Cultures across campus and campuses differ, which directly impacts how change will be managed, executed, and received. Keep in mind the key considerations of your own institution while exploring these strategic approaches to change and institutional evolution.

1. Identifying the need for change

Major change projects and institutional evolution require a systemic and comprehensive approach that considers the problem needing the change. The first step of identifying and framing the problem can lead to effective strategic planning later on. But, lack of understanding of the true problem or lack of intentional identification can result in lack of effective, efficient, and impactful change. Consider the use of design thinking when exploring the need for change, identification of problems, exploration of effective solutions, and qualitative data to emphasize the need for the change.

2. Assessing your current ecosystem

Having a depth and breadth of understanding for the current educational landscape or ecosystem globally, nationally, regionally, and locally is a cornerstone for effective change management. This will likely include consideration of both internal and external factors. These factors may include financial health and history, demographics of students, staff, and faculty, state and national legislative impact, enrollment information, and even consciousness of strategic plans of the institution. There is also great importance in exploring historical and contexts of your institution. Understanding what has been done in the past and why can help inform what can and should be done in the future.

3. Establishing clear strategies with direct goals

The importance of understanding larger strategies and goals and how the current proposed change will fit into, enhance, or detract from them will be a valuable component to leadership buy-in. When exploring goal setting, consider who is included in the conversation and the key stakeholder groups you'd like (or need) involved. When considering supporting our student employees and working learners, think through all of the various entities on campus that touch that process such as Financial Aid, Human Resources, Career Development, academic affairs, student affairs, supervisors, etc. Including key stakeholders who will be impacted by the change in the actual change process can lead to trust and collaboration. Inviting individuals who can provide expertise in risk management and how to mitigate them allows for streamlined goal setting and less back and forth in the process.

4. Communicating through transparency and impact

Ensuring the “sell” of the suggested strategy for change highlights the deep rooted need for the change and the value of the proposition is a powerful approach to buy-in. Being able to successfully speak to the true impact of the change and provide transparency on the approach, consideration, and research done through the proposal allows for open dialogue and ongoing conversations. Creating a successful communication plan that outlines expectations and ongoing plans can avoid misunderstandings while also creating consistency despite turn over or shifts in roles involved. This transparency can lead to collaboration across the institution if others within the organization are working towards a similar change.

5. Utilize resources, but make your own change

Change leaders may be eager to approach their change in a similar way as another institution or even another department within the same organization. This can be seen as a benefit or an opportunity to not have to recreate the process, without considering the unique needs and differences in their own circumstances and situation. Understanding your specific problem, your institutional context, and your individual strategy and goals can lead to effective change. Being able to reference others to benchmark and compare is valuable for collaboration when staying true to your own specific need. When exploring your resources, consider various theories of change models, as outlined below, to support you in exploration of the nature and approach of your change management.

Change Management Theories and Models

Now that you've considered some strategies to approach institutional change, here are a few frameworks and models you can follow when undergoing your own institutional change, as found [here](#):

Kotter's 8 Steps for Leading Change

This theory focuses on the people involved in the change process by looking at these eight steps:

1. **Create** a sense of urgency to motivate people
2. **Build** your change team with leaders and change agents of various skills and departments
3. **Form** and define your strategic vision for what you want to accomplish
4. **Enlist** those involved and communicate with them to get them on board and ensure they know their role
5. **Enable** action by identifying roadblocks and address anything causing friction
6. **Generate** and create short-term goals to break your change management plan into achievable steps
7. **Sustain** the acceleration and keep up the momentum throughout the process of implementation
8. **Institute** change by maintaining the changes after the initial project is complete



ADKAR Change Management Model

This theory supports the change leader in formulating five main goals to base the change management process:

- **Awareness:** Ensure everyone in your organization understands the need for change
- **Desire:** Make your case so everyone involved wants the change
- **Knowledge:** Provide the information each person needs to know on how to accomplish their part of the change process
- **Ability:** Make sure all employees have the skills and training they need to successfully do their part in making the change happen
- **Reinforcement:** Continue to work with employees and stakeholders after you accomplish the desired change to make sure they stay on top of doing things the new way and allowing for continued communication

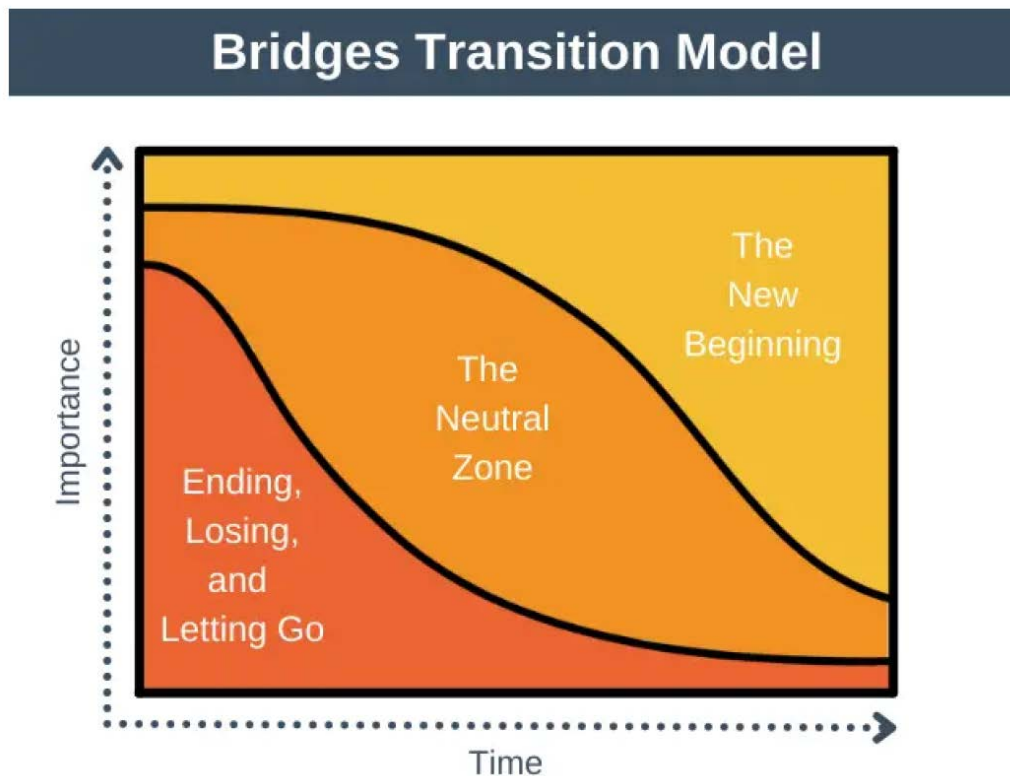
ADKAR CHANGE MODEL



Bridges Transition Model

This theory emphasizes the emotional transition people go through in the course of experiencing and accepting change by recognizing three stages organizations should help guide employees through:

- **Ending, losing, and letting go:** It is common for people to first experience change with resistance, fear, and discomfort.
- **The neutral zone:** When the change is starting to take place, people may be stuck between letting go of the old process and being open to the new.
- **The new beginning:** Once the new change is in place and has been received well, people will now navigate acceptance and comfort with the new process or way of doing things.



Additional Resources

[Strategies for Successful Change: Lessons from the American Council on Education and W.K. Kellogg Foundation Project on Transformational Change](#)

[4 tips to successfully navigating institutional change](#)

[Institutional change management techniques](#)

[Creating and Sustaining Change with a Systemic Institutional Approach](#)